



Leaves of Healing

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Death and Resurrection

Carl Q. Lee

I attended Zion Passion Play recently and was once again deeply moved. How many times I have attended the Passion Play, how many times I have gone to rehearsals I have never sat down to calculate. But once again I was profoundly stirred by what I saw. The story is so very familiar, yes, the action of the play is very familiar. How many times I have gone through it and ever the experience has been the same. But there has been added a little touch at the close of the presentation that particularly moved me on this occasion. I stood for the singing of *The Hallelujah Chorus* and as it came to a close the lights went out and then came on again slowly. In that moment of darkness the setting had been changed. An empty cross adorned the center of the stage, empty of the form Who had died there. Another spotlight picked up the open tomb. Isn't this the heart, the essence of our Christian faith?

What is happening today has happened before. But how are we going to meet it? How are we going to understand it? How are we going to work with it? How are we going to let them work with us? These are questions that we must answer, answer them in our own hearts, answer them by our actions.

Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

The Simplicity of the Early Christian Message

Every Lord's Day when we come up to the House of God, we are commemorating the Resurrection. Frequently we read I Corinthians 15 and other passages which spell out for us the importance and prominence of these two foundation stones of the Christian faith: the death and resurrection of Christ. But how much do we think about the resurrection of our Lord?

How much do we talk about it? How much do we think in terms of what that resurrection means to us? We can hearken back to the First Century of the Christian era and catch the message that was preached then. We read of it in the Book of Acts. And the cutting edge of the message that changed the course of history, that overcame all the thrust and power of an antagonistic empire is found in two basic fundamental things: this Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified is risen from the dead. Peter makes it plain in his sermon in the 2 chapter of Acts. Paul when he talks to the cynics on Mars' Hill points it out. The resurrection was claimed by those who believed, by those who preached and it was proclaimed to a misbelieving, disbelieving skeptical age. Yet the message of the resurrection became a force that changed the course of history, caused a humble people, a non-violent people to stand in the face of all that a powerful empire brought to bear against them and emerge triumphant.

The Simple Message becomes Complicated

Now these things changed, yes, it is true. The simple preaching that

presented the death of Jesus of Nazareth, Who was indeed the Christ; the proclamation of His resurrection; His triumphant victory over death; the assertion that He died for our sins and rose again for our justification; these lost much of their simplicity as the decades and centuries rolled by. Even in those early days there came a change when men began to ask questions that carried doctrinal implications in them, began seeking out nuances of what Jesus meant, of what Paul meant. And Satan took full advantage of the differences of opinion that arose. Those who gained ideas through their own research, through their own understanding and concepts, they brought them into issue against those who believed differently. The simplicity of the message that this Jesus of Nazareth is Savior and Lord; this Jesus of Nazareth died for us and rose again from the dead, became a complicated theological thing which split the Church asunder in a thousand ways and still separates Christian from Christian. Is it not true that we have forgotten the simplicity of the assertion that *He died for our sins, that He rose again from the dead in the resurrection for us?* Haven't we lost the simplicity of this truth? Lost it in the maze of everyday claims upon our lives. Lost it in the maze of theological differences of opinion, of doctrinal differences: differences that have bred hatred amongst those who should have been moved, and should be moved, by the deepest love that man has ever been brought to understand or brought to see.

Revivals of Christian Joy

Periodically down through the centuries of the Christian era there have been, to use an almost threadbare word, *revivals* of the joy that came to the early Christians as he came to that understanding of what it meant that *Christ died for our sins*. Joy came from the knowledge that in this death, in this sacrifice that was made out of love he was forgiven. Forgiven unequivocally, totally. Forgiven by God. Joy came to him from knowing that death had been conquered. And in the victory that Jesus Christ had won there was victory for him. There came a joy out of that that lifted people to pinnacles. A joy that sustained them through some of the most vicious persecution that men ever visited upon men. And periodically down through the centuries

there has been a revival of this joy, a revival of this simplicity of understanding of what God did for us through His Son, in dying upon a cross, in breaking the bonds of death on the day of resurrection. And each one of these revivals, if you wish to call them such, has left their impact upon the Christian Church. Unfortunately men in their sinfulness, in their selfish egoism sometimes have failed to recognize these resurgences of Christian joy and they have failed to incorporate them into their precious systems. As the decades pass soon that joy diminishes, fades, and once again we find ourselves back in the ruts of division, of antagonism, of doctrinaire selfishness.

Christian Joy Today

Once again after a period of unprecedented violence; after a period of violent psychological change; after a period of revolution (and the revolution has not ended yet), we are suddenly confronted with another revival of this primitive joy, of this primitive grasping of the fact that *God for Christ's sake has forgiven our sins*. That Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead to give to us a victory over this which is man's worst enemy. The joy is once again being felt. That joy is once again surging through the hearts of young people throughout our land. Yes, and beyond the boundaries and borders of our land across the world. How are we going to meet this confrontation with the primitive joy that made the Church the power that it was in the First Century, and which down through the centuries since has come to life again, and has come to life again today?

When do you recall, for instance, seeing the front rows of our sanctuary filled by our youth? You know what is happening to them? It happened to you once upon a time. I remember one Wednesday evening prayer meeting when there was a dynamic living testimony by one of the young people of the joy that had come to him as he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord, a joy that he could not explain. He could hardly articulate it. But it was there vivid in his face, vivid in his voice. When he had completed his testimony one of our brothers, nearly eighty years of age stood to his feet and said, "So many years ago the joy of the Lord came to me and has been with me ever since." What is happening today has happened before. But how are we going

to meet it? How are we going to understand it? How are we going to work with it? How are we going to let *them* work with us? These are questions that we must answer, answer them in our own hearts, answer them by our actions. I pray God that once again in the history of the Christian Church there will be an incorporation of this new and fresh joy, the joy that comes out of knowing that Christ died for my sins and rose again from the dead for my justification, into the Christian Church in such a way that the Church can once again become the cutting edge of a force, of a power, that can change the history of the world.

Christian Joy and the Church Today

What has happened in our Church is evidence of something that has happened on a broad scale across this nation. Is it going to create just another division within the Christian Church? Is it going to create something that we feel must be suppressed because it is a little bit too enthusiastic? God forbid! God help us who constitute the established Church in terms of our fellowship, in terms of our living participation in the activity of the Church, to receive this new joy, accept this new dynamic in such a way that it weaves into the structure of the Church that the Church can become the force that it should become in this age, when, God knows, the need is great beyond any comprehension of man for the things that the Church has to offer. The Church has something to offer in the face of death, and this

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civilization of ours is dying. Oh, yes, it seems so vital at times, so pulsingly full of strength, but any careful examination of what is going on brings to light with force that this generation walks with death. But death has no final claim, not upon the Church, not upon the individual, because of what God has demonstrated to us in reference to death and resurrection which still walk hand-in-hand. Whether this new joy becomes the dynamic that changes the course of history will depend upon us, both young and old. Will we suppress it? Will we try to shape and mold it to our own ends? Or will we function under the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit and see once again the dynamic of resurrection? This age needs it! The world needs it! It is happening, and how that happening is going to develop will depend upon our amenability to God's leading and to God's guidance.

Ah, yes, young enthusiasm, young joy, young vigor can sometimes be disconcerting to those of us who have become old and set. But God help us to move with this new joy, with this new power that is sweeping through our youth! Let us by the wisdom that God has given us through Christian maturity work with them that indeed that which is happening in the Christian Church today shall be a dynamic which will change the course of history.

Christian Joy and Growing in Grace

There are specifics we can talk about and we *will* talk about. Specifics, which pray God will be helpful and which will contribute to development and growth, which will contribute to the end that we will accomplish God's will and God's purpose. Today we cannot discuss these things the time is too short but in time we will. We will talk in terms of coming to the best and deepest understanding of Holy Scripture. We will talk about the vital need of personal prayer, of meditation. We will take about the continuing need of recommitment. We will talk about the demands of service, service that compels us by the force of the love of God within our hearts to reach out to others with the power of the message which says, *Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*. Yes, there is much we must talk about. Let us with prayer, with commitment of mind and heart, with the deepest understanding that God can give us, and above all with the Spirit of God moving within

Techniques of Obedience

G. William Mason

If we are earnest about our relationship to God, and if we accept the Bible as the authority for our faith and practice, then we must consider seriously the subject of obedience. Much that God says to us in Scripture is in the form of commandments. So there is great relevance in the consideration of techniques of obedience. Since God issues orders and apparently expects us to obey them, what are we to do?

Obedience and Love

There are at least two possible reactions we may choose when God issues a command: we may obey or disobey. The natural reaction for the non-Christian is disobedience. For those who are committed to Christ, however, there is an alternative, spiritual reaction: to obey. Only the Christian has an option, for in him are combined the natural and the spiritual lives, the natural and the spiritual reactions.

How can we obey God? One lawyer put it to Jesus this way, "What one thing must I accomplish to satisfy God?" Jesus' one-breath reply was, "Love God with every fibre of your being and love your neighbor as you love yourself." In other words, if we desire to obey God, we can love everyone, beginning with God and including ourselves. In I John 5:3 the apostle wrote, "To love God means to obey His commandments." And Jesus said to His disciples (John 14:21), "The person who knows My commandments and obeys them is the one who loves Me." If you find it more difficult to think in terms of obedience than love, then, simply think "love" whenever you read "obedience" or "obey." For some people it is easier to think of our relationship to God in terms of obedience than in terms of love. Whichever is true of you makes little practical difference. The Scriptures teach that in relation to God, love and obedience are virtually synonymous.

I Corinthians 13:4-9a could be read as follows: "Of one who loves our hearts, work with this new thing that has occurred. Maybe it will be given to us to see the change in the course of history.

If you are personally committed to Christ, then these are among the ideals God has set for us: the art of listening, the art of respect for others, the art of humility and the art of honesty. These are techniques in obedience . . .

it can be said that he accepts much suffering, yet is kind. She does not have a low boiling point, or boast about her love, or over-estimate its value. He would not act in an undisciplined manner, insist upon his own way, nor be easily exasperated. She does not make a list of the evil in others, and is not cheered by wickedness but rather by truth. He is quiet about everything, has faith in all things, looks forward eagerly to everything and sticks through thick and thin. She never stops loving anyone." I have deliberately used both masculine and feminine pronouns, not as a gesture to women's liberation but to try to stimulate your thinking in relationship to these specific requirements of those who would love (be obedient to) God.

With this in mind, there are four techniques of obedience I wish to discuss. They are found in the 13th chapter of I Corinthians, and they constitute some of the principles of counseling. One Welshman has written that counselors have a creed, and that creed is love. Since love and obedience are equated in the Bible, the principles of counseling and techniques of obedience overlap at this point.

One writer in the field of psychotherapy has written that a psychiatrist's personal and professional qualifications should be that he must be able to listen. This is the first technique of obedience. If God speaks to us, what does He want but that we listen? The first phrase of I Corinthians 13:7 could be translated literally, "Love covers everything with a roof of silence . . ." What is this but listening?

Listening

Listening is not as easy as it may seem. It is an art which few people master. Many do not even know that it exists. I read recently of a young sales trainee who had participated in a two-hour training session. Toward the end of the session

he rose to his feet and asked an obviously sincere question. The instructor said, "That question was answered near the beginning of this session. Sit down and get the answer from someone who listened." This young man had not mastered the art. When the time came for promotion in his company he was the only one of the fifteen members of his training class who was not advanced.

There was another young man who had fortunately developed somewhat in the art of listening. He proposed to a very shy young lady. She did not answer him immediately or in the near future. I do not recall whether she ever said "yes", but he did not take her silence for a no, as many might have done. He considered the situation and her behavior. He continued to date her and the engagement took place. He illustrates the principle of listening with the heart.

Listening does not come naturally. It takes concentration. This is a second principle in the technique of listening. We speak of being committed to God, and this also requires concentration. To listen to what God says demands that we focus our hearing, our thinking and even our bodily attitudes. I have caught my mind wandering while listening to a sermon preached by someone else. On such occasions, I have scolded myself something like this, "Look! God is speaking through that preacher. I came to hear God's Word. If I am not listening there is something wrong." Failing to listen violates what Paul wrote, that love does not act in an undisciplined manner (I Corinthians 13:5a).

Listening takes notice of tone of voice. When my wife says, with a slight edge to her voice, "It doesn't really matter that you have changed our plans for tonight," I know that she is not deliberately lying to me, but she isn't *really* saying that it doesn't matter. She means that it *did* matter, and that she is upset. Seldom do any of us say *exactly* what we mean, so as we listen to one another we must heed the tone of voice as well. When the words "I love you!" are uttered in sincerity they are beautiful to hear. But when they are uttered through clenched teeth we know they are not to be taken literally. It may be my desire to love you, but if I say it peevishly you *know* that my feelings are not loving.

We speak also by our bodily

attitudes. The recent publicity about "body language" is not all theory. The person who sits with arms crossed firmly and back straight will not listen open-mindedly to what you say. When a man sits next to his wife and turns his back to her this "says something" about his attitude toward her. In obeying God, in loving our neighbors and particularly in prayer life, listening is vitally important. God does not have a body whose attitudes we can read, and there is no physical tone registering in our ears that we could interpret, but God answers our prayers. He has *promised* to answer. Do you end your prayers when you have finished saying what is on your mind? Have you considered seriously that God replies when we talk to Him? If so, then we ought to listen when we pray! We are missing a great deal of what God says to us if listening is omitted from our prayers! Listening is an art in prayer. It is a technique of obedience to God. It is a method of loving our neighbors.

Respect

A second technique in obeying God is respect for one another. In Philippians 2:3, Paul says: "In humbleness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This is not "an easy pill to swallow." It means that we put the interests of other people ahead of our own! This is reflected in the 13th chapter of I Corinthians when the writer says: "Make no account of evil," or "love thinketh no evil." One who is loving (obedient) to God does not say of another, "This, this and this are wrong with that person," or, "He does this that turns me off," or, "She does that and it is not socially acceptable." Our *natural* tendency, however, is to do just that. Doesn't it make us feel better to realize that other people have some of the same faults we have?

It is difficult for a parent to respect his child more than he respects himself. It is also easy to disguise our feelings: to deceive ourselves, to say that my action puts his interests above mine when it does not. Because we are human, we are selfish. It is our nature to want to put ourselves first. But, because the Spirit of God lives in us, we *also* want to put our children (or bosses, or spouses) first. Our two natures always oppose each other, and feelings arise from both, but the Holy Spirit and our new nature is the stronger. Respect for others and listening are important techniques in obedience.

A third technique might be called humility. It might also be called courage. In the Scriptures we are told not to be anxious for anything; that God has not given us a spirit of fear but of love and of power and a sound mind. What then, could cause us to fear? In I Corinthians 13 we are told that the one who is obedient to God (loving) is not easily provoked, that he or she has faith in everything. The idea that there must be something good in everything and everybody no matter how bad it may appear is very much like what Paul is saying here. One who obeys (loves) "Hopeth all things" (anticipates all things eagerly) and sticks through everything. When your child uses that first cuss word, smokes the first cigarette, dates the wrong person the first time, or first stays out too late, it is not easy to react without fear. These situations have dangers inherent in them. Our first, natural reaction is one of fear. "What shall we do?" God says the first step is: "Stop being afraid." The humble person accepts his fear, accepts God's command, and accepts God's promise that He works good in all things to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

When the boss catches you in a mistake, it is difficult to react without fear, even though courage is a normal outgrowth of the Christian life. When you blow your top in the hearing of a subordinate (demonstrating inability to handle the problem without loss of temper) it is easier to ignore or to rationalize your behavior than to admit its ineffectiveness. How can we justify ourselves under such circumstances? We can't. Humility enables us, however, to accept our sins, their consequences, God's forgiveness and man's, and the responsibility to continue to live and to work.

In counseling, when you don't understand something you ask about it, and when you have made an error you apologize for it. There was an institutionalized male patient who demonstrated a strong dislike for the lady psychiatrist's European accent at the outset of therapy. In a later session the man said, "Aren't you from Cambridge?" The psychiatrist immediately began to say, "No, we went through this before and I told you about my accent." He said, "It's funny. You sound so much like

someone I know from Boston." After the session, the psychiatrist realized that the man was trying to say that she had finally made a healing contact with him. She began the next session with an apology to her patient for her failure to understand. From that point the patient made good progress in therapy. Dr. Frieda Fromm-Reichmann in *Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy* goes so far as to say that it is self-righteous for a psychiatrist to make a mistake or to miss something without offering an apology to the patient.

We need not prolong fear even when we are in error, for God uses even the wrath of man to glorify Himself. It can be healthy for us and helpful for other people if we humbly admit our mistakes. Do not the Scriptures say, "Confess your faults one to another?"

Honesty

Listening carefully, respecting the other person more than myself, and humility are all part of obedience to God. So is honesty. We have touched this subject in our comments on courage. Each of these responses is part of obeying God. Each is part of loving God. Each of these responses is opposite to our natural, human reactions. They are the reactions of one who is committed to Christ. If we have been born again, developing each of these techniques can be easier. If you are *not* personally committed to Christ, then consider these responses as goals toward which committed Christians strive. If we don't live up to them we will accept your criticism. God criticizes us anyway, and, if we are obedient to Him, we will criticize ourselves according to these standards.

If you are personally committed to Christ, then these are among the ideals God has set for us: the art of listening, the art of respect for others, the art of humility and the art of honesty. These are techniques in obedience, or, if you prefer, in love. If you are earnest about your relationship to God, you will take obedience to Him seriously, and these are some of its techniques. Learn them for your welfare, and for the benefit of your neighbors. Practice them for Christ's sake, because He said, "The person who obeys My commands — he is the one who loves Me."

"... Think on These Things"

Dr. Charles L. Kessler

The Christian faith is a Biblical faith, and that means that it is not only dependent upon the New Testament, but also that it is firmly rooted in the Old Testament scriptures. The basic witness of the Old Testament is not something foreign to the Christian faith, but something intimately related to it. Sacrifice (the Old Testament priestly interest), promise (the Old Testament prophetic interest) and law (the Old Testament legal interest) are all *fulfilled* in the New Testament. The Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is none other than the Lord who is revealed through His words and acts in the Old Testament. Judaism is not untrue to the Old Testament when it insists upon the importance of the words, "Hear O Israel, the Lord is one God." The Old Testament witness is a constant witness to the continual confrontation of men by a Supreme Person who is Other than men and the world, and yet who "comes" and "visits" men and the world in Creation, Judgment, and Redemption. *This One God is not different from the One God of the Doctrine of the Trinity.* They are the same God.

But the New Testament is genuinely something new. If we sum up the priestly, prophetic, and legal interests of the Old Testament as "promise," the New Testament is in relation to that "promise," "fulfillment." But "fulfillment" is not the same as "promise." It is something different, something new.

The Old Testament conception of God is fulfilled in the coming of God into history in a fully personal way in Jesus Christ. Here in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ a mighty redeeming act of God is seen outworked. Here the self-giving nature of God to come in personal activity to men receives its ultimate statement. For He comes in this human life. He, Himself (and not an intermediary — a prophet, etc.) speaks and acts in history.

But this personal presence of God, this "total event Jesus Christ" is not to be abrogated just because (as is the nature of history) the historical form of the revelation belongs to the past — to about 4 B.C. to 30 A.D. The time of fulfillment did not end with the resurrec-

tion and ascension of Christ. The Kingdom of God did not come into history only to be withdrawn again. No, this was God's ultimate act and revelation (so far as "this age" is concerned). The God of the Christian faith is forever the God who was revealed in and acted through His historical revelation in Jesus Christ. There can be no separation from that. It is only in and through the incarnation that we know God. But that historical revelation is continuously made present to us. Jesus Christ still comes to us and brings the Father and the Kingdom of God to us. This continuous "making present" of the redeeming activity of God in Christ is through the Holy Spirit. Even as God was personally present in Christ, so God who was personally present in Christ is personally present with the Church in the Holy Spirit.

The whole Biblical conception of God, as we have seen, is of a God who, while other than man and the world, yet "comes" and "visits" man and the world. This is so, because contrary to all rationalistic and mystical conceptions the God of the Bible is Person, and His nature is totally love — unmotivated, disinterested, outpouring love (*Agape*).

Thus the Biblical conception of God can never be a *deism* (where God is far removed from man and the world) nor a *pantheism* (where God is identified too closely with man and the world). Both are equally disastrous to the meaning of personal relationship and holy love.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is simply the Church's way to maintain the Biblical conception of God as a Personal God who is dynamically related to the world and men because of His nature of love. Any Unitarianism either separates God too far from the world or gets Him too closely connected. Unitarianism is either deistic or pantheistic in tendency. Unitarianism is always rooted in a rationalistic, philosophic interest. Such an interest can never do justice to the Biblical dimension of a Personal, revealing, creating, judging, redeeming God. The God of the Bible is not one who is found by rational speculation. He is One who *comes* and acts

and speaks His word in history. He is the God of the incarnation. He is the God who continuously is present with those who are in faith relationship with Him.

Hence the Doctrine of the Trinity is not *tritheism*, nor when rightly understood, does it even suggest such an un-Biblical conception. From what we have said, it may be seen that the Church has not been interested in finding three Gods, but in insisting that the revealing, redeeming activity present in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ and in the ongoing revelation through the Holy Spirit is the activity and self-communication of One God — not of a God far removed (and hence who would not reveal Himself to man) nor of a God enmeshed in the world (so that He could not address a personal communication to the world). “Very God of Very God” does not stay far off, aloof, unmoved, unredeeming while a “religious genius” seeks Him, discovers Him and leads mankind to Him, nor does He — in the rarity of His transcendent majesty — merely send an emissary to men. No. It is the nature of Very God to give Himself in love, to come to men. And so He Himself comes seeking His children in a unique incursion of the eternal into the finite in Jesus Christ. And He Himself is present with those who have responded to Him.

So it is very evident that the Doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to do with *tritheism*. It is the Christian assertion of the one-ness of God — but of the unity of the God who is love, and hence who comes and reveals Himself. The Doctrine of the Trinity is the Christian expression of the initiative of God in divine-human relations. It is the view of the God who in the center of His nature is Person, and hence Love. But then it is the God Who is both beyond and above His creation (God the Father), and yet who becomes incarnate in a man in history in order to bridge the gap between Himself and His sinful creatures (God the Son), and who is ever beside His sons as paraclete (God the Holy Spirit).

And what is the relationship of the resurrected, ascended Christ to God? Precisely the same relationship as when God became incarnate in the man Jesus in history. For it is still in this place — in the Christ of faith (who is none other than the Jesus of history) — that we see and know God. For in Him God comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

DISCERNING THE WILL OF GOD

By Rev. Carl Q. Lee

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life with decisions crowding us from every angle, we are often concerned as to whether our decisions are within the will of God or not. It is difficult sometimes to know which way it is that God wants us to go or what it is that God wants us to do. Frequently decisions about which we are uncertain cause deep concern and in that concern we sometimes ask for a sign from God to guide us. Like Gideon of old we will put out a fleece trusting that with the morning light the fleece will be wet or dry as miraculous evidence of God's guidance. However, all too often the fleece gives no sign to show God's will.

This does not mean that God leaves us entirely to our own devices. There are ways by which we can most generally come to an understanding of God's will in any given situation.

First of all, there is the tremendous privilege God has given us of PRAYER, taking a problem to God, laying it before Him in meekness and humility and asking for His guidance. The very act of prayer brings peace of mind and inward assurance that comes from no other source, whether there be a miraculous answer or not. The quietness of spirit that comes from

Is there then no mystery to the Doctrine of the Trinity? No, not in the sense that this is a dogma — One in Three, Three in One — which is just to be accepted and never understood. After all, the formulation of the Doctrine was not speaking in “double talk,” nor did they get its content through hallucinations. The Doctrine was formulated for the precise purpose of giving an intellectually comprehensible, rationally defensible statement of all of the elements in the Christian understanding of God in Christ. It was meant to show how the God Who comes in Christ and the Holy Spirit is really one God.

But yea, there *is* mystery if we are speaking about the basic underlying conception of God — God as love. This is the mystery of faith. It is nothing less than the incomprehensible nature of the Divine love. There is only one other mystery which is ultimate to faith. Why do men persist in refusing this love? Why sin?

this peace and assurance frequently helps us to see through the confusion of everyday life, to discern the will of God, to hear above the welter of noise that so annoys us, “the still small voice.”

In the second place, God has given us the BIBLE, and the words of the Psalmist, true in the ancient day when they were written and true now, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105), bespeak the virtue of the Scriptures to guide us. The Psalmist also said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). As we quietly study the Word of God we can so frequently hear Him speaking to us in words of guidance and understanding in the situation within which we find ourselves, “I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” (Psalm 32:8)

In the third place, it is well to seek the counsel of Christian friends. Lay before them your problem; discuss with them all its implications in terms of your commitment to Christ, and in mutual prayer and mutual discussion there will come the answer you seek. Truly “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst,” and in that Divine Presence there is the guidance that we need to find the will of God.

Finally there is our own best thinking: God has made us thinking creatures — creatures of reason, and it is God's intention that we should use these gifts to discern His will. Emptying one's self as far as it is humanly possible of every selfish motivation and gearing our thinking to our total commitment to Christ, we will find that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide in such a way that the will of God will become apparent.

As we put to the test each of these four means of discerning the will of God we will find that out of that effort will come clear discernment. Above all else though, we have the Divine assurance that regardless of what comes to pass, of what the human situation may bring, there is the Divine promise of our Lord Himself that “Lo, I am with you always,” and in that Presence there will come the guidance that we so sorely need. There will come the clear discernment of the will of God.

"A Thousand Years the Same"

Carl Q. Lee

Scripture Reading: Ephesians, Chapter 4

It has been said, and said rather frequently, that we are living in a very restless age — a time when there are great surges of movement amongst men, both in terms of their earthly ideologies and their religious beliefs. It is a time when there is reckless attack upon ancient truths and when men, under the pressure of what they are endeavoring to accomplish, create scenes of violence, hurt and destruction.

Often it has been said that here in our community, we live in a protected situation. Within the limits of our religious, social and economic surroundings, we go about our daily tasks with relatively little interference. We live in our community with few of the harsh sounds of social strife. We are permitted to come to God's house, the place of worship that we choose, and worship as we see fit. The restlessness of the world about us — its trouble, strife and violence — seems remote. Nonetheless we are in the world and a part of it. Even though we are Christian and count our citizenship in heaven, the fact remains, we are here with certain grave and heavy responsibilities that as Christians, we must meet and with which we must deal.

Criticism Leveled Against Christianity and the Church

In this world, much that we hold precious and dear has been attacked. Our time has been referred to as "the beginning of the post Christian era." Recently a stir was created by a popular song group. One of its members said, "we are more popular than Christianity." Other things have been said. For instance, "that the Church is dead." Comments have been made that the Church, unaware of deep and vital civil problems that exist in the world today, is doing nothing about it. It has been said that the Church has become a social organization, catering to those of like mind, who find little to call their attention to conditions outside of the Church. Many harsh things have been said about the Church. Many harsh attacks have been launched against the things which we hold dear.

Sometimes we react in strange

ways to these charges and, believe me, my reactions are no different than yours. After reading some comment in the newspaper, suddenly I feel my ire rising. The short hairs on the back of my neck begin to get stiff and anger wells up within me. I resent the attacks upon the Church — not just our Church, but the Church as such, throughout the world. Then, on second thought, I realize that if I am to be honest before God and men, I must listen to every harsh voice and criticism. It is my duty to listen to every blasphemous remark that is made because unfortunately, there are those things in the Church that can be attacked and spoken against in the harshest kind of language. We should have sufficient grace in our hearts to face these criticisms, judge their fairness objectively, and then, by the grace and help of God, act upon them. Whenever we close our minds and hearts to criticism, we cease to progress in the call that God has given to us.

The Church, A Force for Good From the Beginning

It is not my intent today to deal with the criticisms leveled against the Church, as such, but with something else. I am going to point to what the Church has done down through the centuries, and still is doing. There is a more positive side to this picture, and by God's grace, may He help us to recognize that the Church has not failed, as men say it has. The Church has not been unaware of the problems that confront the world. It has dealt with these problems down through all the centuries — long before they ever were considered problems by the basic mill run of humanity. I am going to show, by the grace and help of God, that from the initial centuries of the Christian Church when it spoke in a dynamic way to change the course of history, that for a millenium, the Church has been the same.

In the First Century, after our Lord ascended and the disciples took up the work given to them in The Great Commission, they launched out into an antagonistic world — a world of hostility such as never has been encountered since. Oh, yes! this is a hostile world

today, but we still can move with a certain freedom and speak our minds. We still can write as we choose. In that earlier day hostility was encountered first in a synagogue. Then it was encountered from the Gentiles. The Early Christians went through fire and blood to become the Church!

It is a fascinating thing that a group of fishermen, the poorest kind of people you might say, and with the exception of Paul the apostle, uneducated men, could suddenly become the force that changed history! They changed the entire direction in which the world was going. They survived the downfall of the Roman Empire, survived the directed persecution of the government toward their extermination, and still remained a force that finally overwhelmed the whole of the Empire. What was the power that did this? It wasn't the power of marches, movements and demonstrations! not at all! The Christians never walked down the street with a bunch of banners, protesting some evil or injustice. No, they never did!

You can't find a line in the Scriptures saying that Christians launched a demonstration. Well then, what was the power they had which changed the world of their day? It was the power of tenderheartedness and of deep compassion for people. When they encountered the beggar by the wayside, they didn't greet him with a kick as frequently beggars were greeted. Rather the beggar in his rags, filth and disease was taken into the home of the Christian. There he was bathed, fed and clothed, and made to feel the power of love.

Unwanted babies were thrown into rubbish heaps or into the Tiber. The Christian, seeing what was about to happen, said, "No! give me the child." The child was taken into his home where it was fed and clothed, and raised.

When Christians, suddenly set upon by the authority which said, "Worship Caesar or die," they chose to die. Before their tongues were pulled out by forceps and tongs, they prayed for forgiveness for those who persecuted them, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The Person to Person Movement of Christian Good

The force of the Christian dynamic in that First Century was the force that emanated from one person toward another. It wasn't the force of a great massive demon-

stration of a mob of people marching down the street, gathering in a stadium, or shouting their pet slogans. No! it was the demonstration of personal compassion — love that comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! It filled their hearts with the recognition and understanding of the love of God — that love which sent His Son into the world to die for them, and gave them the willingness to die for their fellowmen. This was the power of the Early Church! It was the power of the First Century Church and the Second Century Church — the Church that changed the course of history.

Following the history of the Church down through the next few centuries to the year 1000, approximately, we find that the Church has changed radically. It has moved from a victim of persecution to a place of power. It has moved from the downtrodden, scorned and looked-down upon, to a place of authority in the State. Along with this new position, authority and power came corruption. There came dissensions, petty strife and a lot of things that were evil within the Church — against which men may protest. Yet the Church still remained the only source of consideration for the blind, the lame, the halt, the sick, and the poverty-stricken. The monks, who tried to retire from a world of sin, hate and fear, found that they could not stay within their cells. As they pondered upon the Word of God, they were driven from their sheltered existence to walk among the people. They brought blessing where they could and with healing hands touched the sick. With their own stomachs empty, they gave their food to those who were starving. Finding the orphan, they took him into the confines of their monasteries to raise, feed and educate. The injustices and evil that hurt and destroyed men found remedy at the hands of God's Church. Ah, yes! a Church that could be criticized severely, but it was there, and there alone, that the world found answers to its injustice, and those answers lay in personal concern for the individual that resolved itself into dynamic action. The Church still is involved in feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, binding up the wounds of those who are lacerated and hurt, and living out in an exemplary way the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Tragedy of Corruption and Division

The evil that came into the

Church brought a cleavage which occurred about 1000 A.D. The Eastern Church went its way and the Western Church went its way. It was a petty argument about the use of words which amounted to nothing but it divided Christendom. I imagine that division saw the tears of God, because there is nothing in the Christian faith that condones or exonerates division within the Church. It calls for unity of mind and heart. It calls for unity of purpose. It says that there is one God, one faith, one baptism — one Lord and Father of us all. Even after evil came into the Church and caused it to split, still within the Church was that dynamic that reached out to touch injustice, pain, suffering and need, and bring healing to it.

Yes, the Church went further on its journey away from God. It was because of the evil, the corruption and all the things that can be named that are contrary to the will of God that brought about the Reformation. The Church was unwilling to look at the criticism. The Church was unwilling to listen to Luther, to Huss, to Calvin, and to many others whose names were large on pages of Church history of that day. No! it damned the critics, put them to the stake and burned them to death. They excommunicated them. They would not listen to the criticism even though it was justified. Still it was the Church, and the Church alone, that fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, bound up the wounds of the wounded, and fought injustice. It was on the basis of the individual to the individual, the Christian in his reaction to the needs of his neighbor. Gradually this resolved itself into institutional structures. Every institution that has come into existence down through the centuries for the benefit of the orphan, the fatherless, the widow and the sick has been organized and put into existence by the Church. Every great attack upon government injustice has been launched and covered by the Church. For a thousand years it remains the same.

Circumstances Have Changed — Men Have Not

Today, men haven't changed. Ah, yes, conditions and circumstances have changed. Many things have changed but men have not. Injustice is the same as it was in the time of Christ (later and before.) Hunger is the same. An empty stomach is the same. A broken bone is the same. The ugly facets of

injustice and racial hatred are the same as it was then, and the remedies remain the same!

As I say this, I will be subject to criticism and a great deal of contrary comment. The remedy for these things that violate human freedom and human justice, and cause human suffering, never will be solved by mass movements. It will never be solved by demonstrations, speech-making or legislation. It will be solved only by direct action from one person to another in terms of Christian consideration and compassion for suffering and need.

If I see one who is hungry, and as a Christian I refuse to feed him, I violate my faith. If I see injustice to a person because his skin is a different color than mine, and I do not act to see that he is treated fairly in terms of my individual contact with that person, I violate my faith. If I see injustice in any form and do not act in terms of my individual relationship to the one who is being unjustly treated, then I violate my faith.

Just as surely as I act in Christian love toward my brother, bringing food to the hungry, comfort to the fatherless and to the widow, there will be a reaction within the human heart that will be as a stone dropped in a millpond with wave upon wave expanding, ever reaching out to touch others. Only as the human heart is changed will there ever be any change in the injustice of the world. Only from the Church, where the heart changing power of Jesus Christ has affected men's lives individually, is there going to be any response to the need of the world.

Let me come back to my original premise — the Church has been subjected to terrible criticism. God forgive us if we have been angry with it. May God give us the courage and grace to examine our hearts and our Church in the light of those criticisms, and then, may God give us the strength to make the corrections. Above and beyond this, may God give us the grace to act as Christians toward our fellowmen.

Some day, somewhere down the line, perhaps even now, men will come to realize that the Church, despite its failures, mistakes, smugness and self-satisfaction, has been the means with which God has dealt with injustice — the pain, suffering and comfortlessness of the world. May God grant that we as a Church shall fulfill our responsibilities to Him!